

STATE OF MICHIGAN

Family  
Independence  
Agency

## Success today, yesterday and tomorrow

### 100<sup>th</sup> Achiever ceremony is platform to discuss welfare reform

May-June 2002

*In this issue*

Visions 2002.....2

From the director .....3

Branch County  
Achiever Connie  
Kramer.....4

Midland County gives  
awards to FIA, Work  
First staff.....5

Intercepted letters....6

Case Management  
Tools, or DDE.....8

Wayne County  
Achiever Raquel  
Dubois.....10

Nokomis Center nets  
national award.....12

Woodland Center  
opens at Maxey.....13

Van Buren celebrates  
children's service  
success.....14

Tribute to Earl  
Steenstra, late MCB  
chairperson .....16

Mecosta County's  
Quality Recognition  
award.....17

FIA web site migrates  
to michigan.gov.....18



Past and current Achievers of the Month posed with Gov. John Engler during the 100<sup>th</sup> achiever ceremony March 28 in Livonia. The day-long event included Engler's address on welfare reform and visits to Michigan Works! Agency "one stop" service centers around metropolitan Detroit.

LIVONIA—A March 28 ceremony celebrating the Family Independence Agency's 100<sup>th</sup> Achiever of the Month was the platform to discuss the success of welfare reform in Michigan and future prospects. Governor John Engler, FIA director Douglas E. Howard and executives from state agency welfare reform partners met at the ceremony, where the FIA presented its statewide [Achiever of the Month](#) award to Raquel Dubois of Detroit. The award ceremony took place at Burton Manor in Livonia.

"Raquel is someone that's really turned things around," Engler said about the achiever of the month. "Some workers at the FIA office showed special interest and helped make this happen."

Engler said Michigan's welfare reform program is embodied in the achiever of the month program. "It puts a face on the struggle to escape" joblessness and hopelessness, he said. "We once thought there was a permanent underclass." Under welfare reform people "get back to the dream that brought so many people to America in the first place."

Engler said reauthorization of the national welfare reform act, now under discussion in Washington, should be built around flexibility for states, a focus on work, and efforts to strengthen families.

The program included the achiever ceremony, hosted by the Wayne County FIA Redford District, Engler's address and visits to one of three local Michigan Works! Agency "one stop" service centers that provide a broad array of services to Work First customers. Attenders could take free transportation from Burton Manor to tour local one stop centers.

Other dignitaries attending the event included Michigan Department of Career Development director Barbara Bolin, James Haveman, director of the Michigan Department of Community Health, Phil Kazmierski, deputy director of the Michigan Department of Transportation, and Jim Logue, director of the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

■ To read about Raquel Dubois, go to page 12.

# Visions 2002

## FIA unit co-sponsored event on services, new technology for blind & visually impaired

Information: Margaret Wolfe

Washtenaw County Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled  
Call (734)-971-6059 or e-mail [wolfem@co.washtenaw.mi.us](mailto:wolfem@co.washtenaw.mi.us)

ANN ARBOR—The Washtenaw County Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled and Michigan Commission for the Blind partnered in April to present “Visions 2002”, an event to help blind and visually impaired persons find new resources.



The free daylong event connected people who cannot read print because of a visual or physical disability with vendors, resources and providers of low-tech and high-tech solutions designed to increase independence and improve quality of life. Visions 2002 took place April 17 at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor.

“Visions 2002 received support from many organizations and individuals, including Kellogg Eye Center, Ann Arbor Host Lions Club, Michigan Braille Transcribing Fund and Assistive Media,” said Margaret Wolfe, coordinator of services for the Washtenaw County Library for the Blind and Physically Disabled.

“I’d like to acknowledge the Ann Arbor-based creative shop, Market Arts. They served on the planning committee and provided concept development and design for the Visions 2002 logo, vendor applications, invitations and programs free of charge.”

Michigan Commission for the Blind, a unit of the Family Independence Agency, co-sponsored the event.

“Partnering with friends like these makes it possible to spread the word about services that make life easier and more productive for everyone,” said Commission for the Blind director Patrick Cannon.

Agencies and businesses that work with people with vision loss were on hand to answer questions and put people in touch with resources. Guests picked up free catalogs that feature low vision items from product exhibitors. Participants tried out products and experimented with recent advances in technology that improve the quality of life for people who are blind or visually impaired.

About 70 vendors and organizations displayed their services and/or product catalogs, more than twice the number since the last low vision fair in spring 2000.

Visions 2002 was relocated from the Washtenaw County Library facility to the Morris Lawrence Building on the WCCC campus to accommodate more people and service providers. More than 10,000 persons were invited to attend including blind and visually impaired persons from southeastern Michigan and their family members.



### FIA Icon

a publication of Michigan  
Family Independence Agency

**John Engler**, Governor  
**Douglas E. Howard**, Director  
Family Independence Agency  
**Karen Smith**, Director  
FIA Office of Communications  
**Larry VanDeSande**, Editor  
[VanDeSandeL@michigan.gov](mailto:VanDeSandeL@michigan.gov)  
**Lynn Ettinger**, Online Production



### Editorial Board

**Sue Doby**  
[DobyS@michigan.gov](mailto:DobyS@michigan.gov)  
Department of Information Technology/ITMS  
**Anna Gallagher**  
[GallagherA@michigan.gov](mailto:GallagherA@michigan.gov)  
Office of the Director /Deputy Director  
**Julie Horn Alexander**  
[HornJ@michigan.gov](mailto:HornJ@michigan.gov)  
Office of Reengineering & Quality Management  
**Mary Mehren**  
[MehrenM@michigan.gov](mailto:MehrenM@michigan.gov)  
Child and Family Services Administration  
**George Noonan**  
[NoonanG@michigan.gov](mailto:NoonanG@michigan.gov)  
Field Operations Administration  
**Anne Sinicropi Sigourney**  
[SigourneyA@michigan.gov](mailto:SigourneyA@michigan.gov)  
Family Independence Services Administration  
**Gary Swan**  
[SwanG@michigan.gov](mailto:SwanG@michigan.gov)  
Office of Human Resources  
**Patrick Vaughan**  
[VaughanP@michigan.gov](mailto:VaughanP@michigan.gov)  
Administration on Budget, Analysis  
and Financial Management

■ Submit stories online through the editor or  
an appropriate Editorial Board member.

# From the Director

By Douglas E. Howard  
Director, Family Independence Agency



## What's on the horizon for us?

Two historic elements are on their way later this year that have the potential to change the way we do business in the Family Independence Agency—the state early retirement program that began in April and ends in November, and reauthorization of the federal welfare reform act. Each promises to bring some change to our agency and our work lives.

Early retirement will affect our agency's most senior employees, meaning our departing co-workers will take with them a lot of experience and memories. As you know, the state's plan is to replace one retiree in four, meaning three-quarters of those who leave might not be replaced.

It's a golden parachute for retirees-to-be, but with a silver lining for the rest of us. The early retirement program will ultimately present opportunities for less senior staff persons to step up and assume leadership roles as our organization changes.

While retirements in themselves will not change state laws or our mandate to provide cash assistance or child and family services, it has the potential to change the way we administer the agency. It is up to us to make sure the changes we make reflect opportunities to improve, a commitment to families, a focus on our core services, and the strengths of our employees.

The federal welfare reform act expires this autumn and will likely be reauthorized with some changes. The president introduced a plan that would include increased hours of work for TANF recipients and include grant funds for states to try out ideas under the heading of family formation.

There have also been voices suggesting the reauthorized legislation should include follow-up on families after their cash assistance cases close. As head of the National Governor's Association, Gov. John Engler has promoted state flexibility as the key to success in reauthorization.

An April 2 Congressional hearing on reauthorization was held in Saginaw. There is still a long way to go with this legislation before we form concrete ideas on what reauthorization may bring. Yet it is probably fair to think there will be some changes when the legislation is considered and approved by the U.S. Congress.

So it's clear the potential for change is imminent. I have no fear about the future and you shouldn't either. Still, I know the specter of change troubles some of us. What can we do about that?

In Customer Service Training we were taught there is little we can do about forces affecting us that are outside our area of control, but we have total control over the way we react to those changes. I think now is a good time to remember this.

Regardless of what happens, we still have jobs to do for the people of Michigan. Even if something important changes where we work, our goals and mission will remain the same. Even with changes to our work place we're still going to have opportunities for success and gratification.

Let's work together to make that the legacy of change through the remainder of 2002. If we do that, we'll have the best chance of delivering quality service to our customers and feeling good about what we do.

Thanks for your help as we rededicate ourselves in the midst of changing times.

---

# Determination defines 99<sup>th</sup> Achiever of the Month

## Branch County woman is honored for her talents and ability to reach goals

By Cheryl Downs, Project Zero Coordinator

Branch County Family Independence Agency, Coldwater

Telephone (517) 279-4251

COLDWATER—Connie Kramer has a positive outlook that helped her through some pretty tough trials in becoming successful.

For that, she was honored as the Family Independence Agency's 99<sup>th</sup> [Achiever of the Month](#) Award during a Feb. 22 event at the Branch County FIA.

Family Independence Agency director Douglas Howard spoke of Kramer's motivation and determination to become independent from the welfare system.

"I am not surprised, but am delighted," he said. "It is gratifying to be part of an occasion that acknowledges the progress of individuals like Connie. Too often we applaud success with little or no thought to the journey that leads to a victory.

Howard said the Achiever ceremony is also important because it involves special people like Connie with our FIA staff, "So they can see that what they do does make a difference."

### [Michigan beginnings](#)

Connie grew up in the Jackson area, where she and two brothers were raised by their grandparents because of the early deaths of their parents. Later she lost her youngest brother due to a hit and run accident.

Connie moved to Florida, North Carolina and in 1995 back to Michigan. She and her daughter, Kayla, lived in homeless shelters in Lansing and Jackson. By this time Connie had worked as a cashier, in a factory, as a short order cook, hotel housekeeper, and correctional officer in Florida and had completed several years of college.

It was at this point that Connie first turned to FIA for assistance. For several years she received Family Independence Program, Food Assistance and Medicaid benefits. After going to Florida in 1999, they again moved back to Michigan and received Medicaid and Food Assistance benefits. She was also referred to the Work First program.

At her Work First orientation she learned the agency had a job opening. She applied for the position and was hired part-time as a resume writer. She became a full-time employee in May 2000 when she became the Work First transportation coordinator.

Since January 2000, the only service Connie received from FIA was child day care. She was able to support her daughter and herself with her employment income from Work First.

During her ceremony, FIA speakers included Mary Pat Kruger, Connie's family independence specialist, and Kristi Gatke, another FIS who worked with Connie on orientations at the Michigan Works! Service Center.

Kristi told the audience: "As transportation coordinator and driver, Connie went above and beyond what was required to accommodate clients and ensure timely arrival to jobs and interviews at anytime-day or night.

"Most importantly, I believe one of the most valuable services she gave was listening. It is just as important to not always try to fix and advise, but to just be present and listen.

"From what I observed, Connie gave 100 percent of herself to her family, her job, co-workers and clients," Gatke said. "It is no wonder she was able to rise above obstacles in her path to become self-sufficient and succeed so quickly."

Kristi said Connie's resolve was strong and she exhibited unspoken strength. "She found opportunity in the middle of difficulty," Kristi said. "Unconsciously she knew success was the result of small efforts repeated day in and day out.

*continues next page*



# Determination defines Connie Kramer

*continued from page 4*

"Her perseverance and positive attitude leave no doubt she will be successful at any goal she sets."

Victoria Hicks, employment counselor at Michigan Works! Service Center, congratulated Connie, describing her as resourceful and determined.

Others made it a momentous occasion. State Rep. Steve Vear of Hillsdale presented Connie with a tribute from the Michigan Legislative. Branch-Hillsdale FIA director Connie Dykman gave her a gift from the Branch County FIA Board. In addition, state FIA director Howard presented a gift certificate.

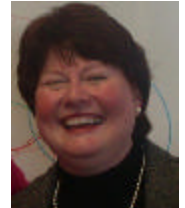
It was a day Connie, her daughter Kayla and her grandmother, who was there, will long remember.



**It takes a family:** Connie Kramer's success was a product of this group, from left: Mary Pat Kruger, Branch County FIA family independence specialist; Connie Kramer and daughter Kayla; Kristi Gatke, family independence specialist with Branch County FIA; Victoria Hicks, Work First employment counse-



**Connie Kramer and daughter Kayla with state Rep. Steve Vear.**



**Connie Dykman**

## Caught in the act of good customer service

### Midland rewards staff, Work First case managers for excellent service

By Paul Petiprin, Family Independence Manager  
Midland County Family Independence Agency, Midland  
Telephone (989) 839-1137

MIDLAND—We've come a long way since October 1996 when Work First became a part of our lives. It certainly seemed that way April 9 at Midland FIA.

The folks in Midland attended a luncheon that day to recognize the good Project Zero work of family independence specialists for the first quarter of 2002. **Debbie Johnson** received an award for having the highest average number of customers on her caseload working. She hardly ever has more than one FIP case unemployed.

Staff also took advantage of this opportunity to recognize customer service excellence. They are reminded to nominate

someone during the quarter they feel has been caught in the act of doing excellent internal and external customer service.

The surprise was that this quarter they went out of the building and around the corner to the Work First office and nominated the two case managers, Shelly Lawrence and Lionel Rodriguez.

Shelly and Lionel are known for their dedication, willingness to communicate with staff, be dropped in on at any time by FIA staff, and deep concern for the well being of their



**Lionel Rodriguez and Shelly Lawrence**

customers. Quick terminations are not part of their vocabulary and they always go the extra mile to ensure that those with whom they work have every opportunity to succeed.

We are happy that we have them as partners because they make our jobs easier.

# Intercepted letters

**Date:** March 25  
**To:** FIA Icon  
**Subj:** Cancel my subscription

I have a concern with regard to the "Intercepted letters" portion of FIA Icon. It seems there are never any intercepted letters which are critical. I find it difficult to believe this is a representative portrayal. Despite positive information contained in the newsletter, that section has to be considered propaganda and calls into question the validity of the rest of the publication. Please remove us from your mailing list until that section of your newsletter is removed.

**Mark Constance, Editor**  
**Arenac County Independent**  
**Standish**

**Date:** March 15  
**To:** Douglas E. Howard  
**Subj:** Workshop well done

We are writing to express our thanks for Michigan's role hosting the recent Big Ten Food Stamp Program Policy and Payment Accuracy workshop. It appears workshop participants successfully identified and created new policies, procedures and potential waivers that could improve payment accuracy. In addition, participants indicated the event presented a valuable opportunity to meet with peers to discuss the Food Stamp Program and strategize to identify potential improvements.

Evaluations from the workshop show 100 percent of participants rated the workshop "good" to "excellent" and 93 percent rated it "good" to "excellent" as a motivational event. Big Ten events in 2000 resulted in nearly \$13 million in cost avoidance or savings and numerous program improvements. This workshop will also contribute to cost-avoidance and program improvement.

The work involved with holding the workshop was expertly handled by Michigan staff. Please pass on our appreciation to Michigan's Big Ten Steering Committee member, Gary Miller, who organized the event and ensured that the workshop was a success. We appreciate your continued support and look forward to working with your staff in the future.

**Theodore O. Bell, Regional Administrator**  
**U.S. Food and Nutrition Service**  
**Chicago**

■ Gary Miller adds, "Jeni Ottney deserves a lot of the credit for her role in organizing this event."

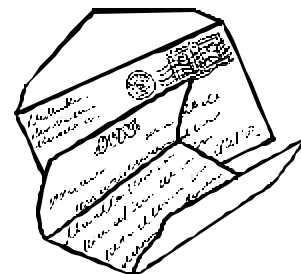
**Date:** March 2  
**To:** Mary Thompson, Family  
Muskegon County Family  
**Subj:** Wonderful changes

**Independence Specialist**  
**Independence Agency**

I am writing to inform you of all my wonderful changes. First, I recently received a pay increase and am making \$10.29 an hour. I am working 40 hours a week. Second, I have started to receive child support payments. I receive a check every two weeks for \$102 and I have just received my second check. Last, but certainly not least, I have just purchased a home with the Habitat for Humanity. I closed on my house Feb. 12 and I am currently residing there. My mortgage payment is \$438.81 a month and the first payment was made March 1. I would like to thank you for influencing me to seek a better life for my family and myself. I really appreciate you assisting me in the constant struggle for ultimate happiness.

**Farrah Scott**  
**Muskegon**

■ Submitted by Robin Brand.



---

**Date:** March 2  
**To:** FIA Icon  
**Subj:** Questionable integrity

I read "New legal effort to end domestic violence" in the FIA Icon for February 2002 and came away with question: how could a nonpartisan journalist judge the legitimate lead of the cover article to be who signed the bills, rather than what, why or how these new laws impact FIA? My objection is seeing political initiative being supported, especially covertly, in a supposedly nonpolitical publication that is paid for by all taxpayers of Michigan.

**Rick Marshall**  
**Houghton Lake**

■ The author addressed the headline. The story was selected as the lead because the legislation had the greatest statewide impact to FIA staff and customers that month. Michigan Domestic Violence Prevention and Treatment Board—a unit of the FIA—received new duties as a result of the legislation. The work group that developed the legislation included the FIA director and chairperson of the Domestic Violence Board. These facts were cited in the story.

**Date:** Jan. 31  
**To:** Gladwin County FIA  
**Subj:** My case

Since our move from Florida almost eight years ago our family has needed assistance in the past years. I recently have experienced some medical problems which required several tests and surgery. I contacted my social worker Jeffrey York because I had no health insurance. Of all my past social workers I never really felt like a real person until now. Jeff was very professional yet very personal. He took the time to work with me. I have never had the honor to meet Jeff but on the phone he has never rushed me. He was always polite and never rude. He explained everything for me. Jeff gave me the sense that he cared, which was a nice change. Jeff ended up providing me with a spend-down account to help with my medical bills. I basically wanted to say "thank you" for all his help to my family and myself. He is an asset to this agency and to this community.

**Shelly S. Gutzmer**  
**Beaverton**

■ Jeffrey York is a family independence specialist with Gladwin County FIA.

**Date:** Dec. 15, 2001  
**To:** Nancy Doyle, Family Independence Specialist  
Gladwin County FIA  
**Subj:** Thank you

I wanted a chance to say "thank you" and let you know how we are progressing. I took the job I was offered as a stylist and have been with them ever since. I also found housing and we have a very nice apartment that is really perfect for us. The schools here are amazing. My son is in the second grade and loves it here. My daughter, who is three, is happy, healthy and beautiful. We all have had more opportunities in the last year and a half than ever before. And I have faith (as you did) that things will continue to get better. Thank you again and all the best to you.

**Lee Brewer**  
**South Lyon**

■ Submitted by Karin Aman.



---

# Case management tools

## Data exchange program helps field staff manage paperwork process

### Program developed by two Central Office staff a hit in counties

By Andrew Piper, Project Zero Coordinator

Gratiot County Family Independence Agency, Ithaca

Telephone (989) 875-8238

A common sentiment shared by Family Independence Agency front line workers is to feel they are swimming in an ocean of paperwork with no relief in site.

If you ask any family independence specialist, eligibility specialist or clerical worker what occupies most of their work time, the common answer would likely be the endless flow of paperwork. If someone were to make a drastic and lasting impact to increase overall productivity, that would likely be a good place to start.

That was exactly the idea Steve Coscarelli and Bob Scriver had a couple years ago. Together, they created the new desktop tool available to FIS, ES and clerical staff called Case Management Tools. It was formerly called DDE Forms; DDE is short for dynamic data exchange.

#### Time and labor saver

Steve is the Project Zero analyst in FIA Outstate Operations and Bob is coordinator for systems, support and access programming in FIA Office of Systems and Technical Services. Through their efforts they designed an ingenious method that helps increase worker productivity and accuracy.

The DDE-Case Management Tools process involves using stored case and recipient information found in the state Data Warehouse, organizing it using a Microsoft Access application, then merging the data into Microsoft Word templates.

The program allows for almost instantaneous completion of case and customer information to be inhabited into commonly used template forms on employees' personal computers. The bottom line is Case Management Tools does a lot of work for specialists.

Before, workers had to manually enter—either by computer or by hand—information pertaining to a case including case number, recipient names and numbers, addresses and other pertinent information.

Now, it's just a matter of a couple of clicks of the mouse and...presto! All the information is entered into forms on our desktops. This works to drastically reduce the time workers spend entering data into forms.

What are people saying about Case Management Tools? Mostly good things.

"I'm very pleased with this product and proud of the exceptional work by Steve and Bob," said Jim Nye, director of FIA Outstate Operations. "Working directly with our customers to ensure the system meets their needs is the key to its success."

#### Popular with field & administrators

Nye said the program was very useful during the recently completed Food Assistance case read.

"Based on their DDE system, they developed the electronic Food Assistance Program case reading system," said Nye. "It has been invaluable in collecting data from the recent case reading sweep. With the input of local office feedback, the program seems to be a hit.

"It's definitely a winner for us."

A county director where the application was first tested affirmed its effectiveness, as well.

"The development of DDE forms is the perfect example of how Central Office and the local office can work together to create a user-friendly time saving tool for workers' use," said Jan Baszler, acting director of Gratiot County FIA.

"DDE form usage has reduced time spent on monotonous tasks, allowing us to focus more on customer service and accuracy issues. It sells itself as a product as workers become familiar with its use."

How do family, clerical and eligibility specialists—the people who use it most often—feel about Case Management Tools?



---

“It is definitely a time-saver, especially at review time,” said Amy Byrne, a family independence specialist with Gratiot County FIA. “I can’t imagine not having it now.”

Mary Jo Cupples is an eligibility specialist with Gratiot County FIA. “The medical review forms are nice,” she said. “You don’t miss a (required) form.”

Lori Eichorn, another FIS at Gratiot FIA, put appropriate closure on the discussion when she said, “Case Management Tools is much better than the previous way of completing forms.”

#### A history lesson

To better understand the progression of Case Management Tools from conception to being placed on specialists’ desktops, let’s take a short trip through its history.

In 1999, while working at the Ingham County FIA in Lansing, Coscarelli began to think there had to be a better method of colonizing typical case information into template forms. He began experimenting with an Access database that would store typical case information and began linking it with FIA template forms. Once the data was entered, it could be used over and over into linked forms.

#### Linking data to application

At the same time, Bob Scriver was working on methods of retrieving usable data from the state Data Warehouse in Lansing. When Steve came to Central Office in 2000, he became interested in the work Bob was doing and Bob became involved in the Access database Steve had developed.

It seemed each had pieces of the puzzle that would assist the other. Steve had the idea how Access could be used to increase worker proficiency. Meanwhile, Bob was perfecting the process of making queries to Data Warehouse to collect usable case and recipient information.

Steve and Bob worked collaboratively to perfect the Case Management Tools application to extract and store usable information from the CIS Data Warehouse and make it available for workers to utilize.

#### 2000 pilot program

In autumn 2000, the initial DDE Forms application was piloted in the Gratiot, Mecosta and Charlevoix-Emmet county FIA offices. Donna O’Grady, who was then acting director for Gratiot County, had previously worked with Steve and Bob during the design phase. She was anxious to bring this time saving tool to Gratiot County.

“There was a dedication to serving the needs of our workers in this project,” Scriver said.

Through the pilot process and feedback efforts from staff at local offices, Case Management Tools forms were perfected and released for statewide use in September 2001.

The Case Management Tools program is a valuable instrument available to assist workers with caseload management and to monitor and track data. Thanks to the dedication of Steve Coscarelli and Bob Scriver and feedback and cooperation from local offices, this tool serves FIA field specialists very well, saving them time and effort and freeing them to do more than paperwork with their scarce time.



Bob Scriver and Steve Coscarelli

***“There was a sense of urgency to get this out to the field,” Coscarelli said. “There was a need to design this program from the bottom up instead of the top down.”***

---

# 100<sup>th</sup> Achiever of the Month wants it all

## Raquel Dubois is signature individual at momentous event

By Gene Hashley, Communications Director

Wayne County Family Independence Agency, Detroit

Telephone (313) 456-1221

Raquel Dubois' journey on the road to self sufficiency got off to a slow start, but now that she is moving she vows not to stop until, "I have it all."

Not only is she determined to gain more education to get a better job, she wants to buy a rental house for each of her three children to finance their college education and, most importantly, she wants to be a positive role model for them. She is now the mother of three, Nakya Holt, 11, Joseph Holt, 10 and Ashley DuBois, 8.

Raquel's outstanding progress, plus her determination to "have it all" earned her the honor of being the Family Independence Agency's 100<sup>th</sup> statewide [Achiever of the Month](#). The Redford District office of the Wayne County Family Independence Agency nominated Dubois, of Detroit, for the award.

"This month, I have the privilege of recognizing Raquel Dubois for her motivation and determination to become independent from the welfare system," said FIA director Doug Howard at a ceremony in Livonia.

Several state dignitaries including Gov. John Engler attended the 100<sup>th</sup> Achiever of the Month event. Former achievers of the month from other parts of the state were also on hand to honor Dubois as the 100<sup>th</sup> Achiever.

### Change of heart

The 100<sup>th</sup> achiever, Dubois, was not always determined and motivated.

She first came to FIA in February of 1987 as a pregnant teenager in need of assistance. She had no transportation, limited education and no source of child care. For several years she and her children were Aid for Dependent Children recipients and later when the program changed, her children began receiving Family Independence Program benefits.

When, in 1997 under new welfare reform requirements, Dubois was referred to Work First; she considered it a negative intervention in her life. According to her FIA worker and her Work First counselor at Resource Network, Inc., Dubois was apprehensive, extremely negative and did not want to be there. In fact, at that time she thought that it was one of the worst things she ever had to do. Dubois recalls that she came to her initial Work First session "very inappropriately dressed for work."

Resource Network provided Dubois with job search assistance, resume writing training and one-on-one interviewing practice and bus fare. Work First later helped Dubois purchase a vehicle. Soon, she found a job as a nurse's aid.

### Starts, stops, restarts

Soon she began to see that employment really did provide a better life for her and her children and in December of 1997 her cash assistance case closed due to earnings. In 1999, she was able to purchase the home that she had been renting.

Last summer Dubois lost her job, ran out of unemployment benefits and nearly lost her home. Even though times were tough, she did not want to reapply for assistance. Redford District family independence specialist Susanne Hartman encouraged her to view unemployment as a temporary setback and convinced her not to risk losing her home.

Dubois again applied for FIP and her case was opened in September 2001. She again was referred to Work First, but had a more positive attitude this time. Resource Network provided nurse's assistant training, interview clothing and money to purchase work uniforms. In October, just one month after going back on assistance, Charter House of Farmington Hills hired Dubois as a nurse's assistant caring for elderly patients.

In November 2001, her FIP case closed again due to earnings. She credits Hartman, Sandra Crayton, case manager and Janet Matiere, job developer at Resource Network, for helping her succeed.

### Special notation

Dubois speaks enthusiastically about her job at Charter House and the patients that she cares for. “They are all so wonderful,” she says. But she plans to obtain more education to become a licensed practical nurse and continue on to become a registered nurse. “I won’t stop until I have it all,” she says.

And has she succeeded in being a positive role model for her children? Her 11-year-old daughter, Nakya thinks so. Nakya stepped to the microphone and eloquently told the audience how proud she is of her mother and her success. When she was done, there wasn’t a dry eye in the house.

When the event was over, most in the audience, including FIA staff members, visitors, dignitaries and more than a dozen former Achievers of the Month in attendance, could relate to something said earlier.

At the beginning Wayne County FIA director Jerome Rutland said, “We have a lot of pride in what we do.” He was speaking for Wayne County employees but his comment represented everyone there that day.

More than anything, the 100<sup>th</sup> Achiever of the Month event was about being proud of the successes we have together.



**Big day:** Raquel Dubois got a legislative tribute from state Rep. Derek Hale. Daughter Nakya, left, told the crowd her mom earned it .



**Visions from the 100th achiever ceremony:** FIA director Howard kicks off the ceremony with (from left) Sandra Traylor, Wayne County Redford District manager; Wayne County FIA director Jerome Rutland; and Achiever of the Month Raquel Dubois. Attendees had to have a significant sight impairment not to see the messages of the day, which were posted on placards around the room. The messages were intermingled with stories from some of Michigan’s other Achievers of the Month, many of whom attended the ceremony. Also throughout the room state partners had tabletop displays with information about their contributions to Michigan’s welfare reform effort.



---

# FIA facility gets organization excellence award

## Nokomis Challenge Center methods improve staff and treatment

By Kate Hanley, Director

Nokomis Challenge Center, Prudenville

Telephone (989) 366-5368

**A**n FIA juvenile justice center—[Nokomis Challenge Center in Prudenville](#)—received the Organizational Excellence Award presented by the Association for Psychological Type at the organization's international conference in Minneapolis last June.

The award recognizes an organization outside of the field of psychological type for the ethical use of type to improve business practices and the work of employees.

Nokomis Challenge Center, a Bureau of Juvenile Justice residential treatment center for adjudicated adolescents, serves 20 male and 20 female residents. The center provides intensive programming that addresses substance abuse, social skills, academic deficits, and behavioral problems.

All members of the Nokomis organization have taken the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI) personality inventory and have attended a workshop to learn about personality types. In addition, Nokomis staff members administer a related test to residents to provide better treatment.

[There are 16 recognized psychological "types"](#). The MBTI personality inventory identifies individual preferences and assists people in understanding the way they take in information and process it. Organizations that use this instrument to improve teamwork—including the Nokomis Center—enhance effective communication and improve stress management.

The MBTI assists teams in clarifying steps for effective problem solving and identifying the areas in which they are well equipped and those in which extra awareness is needed. Effective use of the information provided by the MBTI can lead to improved conflict resolution and allow for different perspective to be heard and valued.

There is no one style that is best; all 16 types have important strengths to add to the team. Understanding one's type preferences and those of team members can improve communication and heighten appreciation of the unique contributions each person makes.

[Nokomis residents are given a form of the MBTI](#), the Murphy-Meisgeire Type Indicator for Children® (MMTIC). A licensed professional counselor interprets the results for each individual, ensures the concepts are clear, and answers all questions. The resident's type is used for more effective treatment planning and therapeutic interventions. Type influences learning style—how someone takes in information and processes it—and must be considered when presenting new ideas and challenging old beliefs. The teachers at Nokomis also use this information to develop more effective lesson plans and class work.

An important finding is 65 percent of the Nokomis residents are a type known as "sensing with a perceiving attitude", compared to 27 percent in the general population.

Persons with this personality type focus on the present and what can be observed through the five senses. They prefer facts and practical hands-on activities. They attend to information coming in from the environment in an open, curious and adaptable manner. They like to see results from their actions, enjoy a fast pace and freedom to explore.

The typical educational environment in the public schools is not set up for the learning styles and competencies of this psychological type. The "sensing-perceiving" person needs to experience what they learn. Programming at Nokomis meets this need through experiential learning in classroom and treatment.

It is the responsibility of treatment staff to understand the personality types and develop programming that maximizes the chances of residents learning and making positive changes. All members of the Nokomis organization will continue to improve their ability to work cohesively as a team and effectively with the young people in our care through the use of the MBTI and MMTIC. Earning the Organizational Excellence Award recognizes the efforts made to creatively apply psychological type in the service of the Nokomis mission and goals. This has been a team effort and a team achievement.

■ For more information on the 16 psychological types, check out this web site: <http://typellogic.com/>



# Woodland Center opens at Maxey Training School

## Completion of \$40 million rebuilding program celebrated by officials

By Mary Hedgepeth, Departmental Analyst

W.J. Maxey Boys Training School, Whitmore Lake

Telephone (734) 449-3222

WHITMORE LAKE –“They said it couldn’t be done. They said it would never happen. They were wrong,” declared Doug Howard, director of the Family Independence Agency, at the dedication ceremony of the training school’s newest addition.

“Today we are here to celebrate what they deemed impossible.”

On March 22, Maxey director Nelson Griffis Ph.D. and his staff sponsored a dedication ceremony to open the new Woodland Center featuring Chief Justice Maura Corrigan of the Michigan Supreme Court.

The 156,000 square foot complex is Michigan’s newest, most technologically advanced treatment facility. The center has the unique designation of being a “flex secure” environment meaning that it is licensed as a high secure building but is also capable of serving closed-medium secure programs. This flexibility allows a spectrum of youth to be rehabilitated.

“All who are associated with Maxey should be commended for the continuing enhancements of educational and treatment programs as well as safety and security. Because of those ongoing improvements most of the youth who leave Maxey go on to become positive contributors to society,” said Corrigan.

“This \$40 million, 200-bed high security facility demonstrates the governor’s and FIA’s commitment to state of the art programming for youthful offenders,” said Howard, “in an environment that is safe for youth, staff and the community and facilitates targeted treatment and education for youth.”

The commitment is illustrated in specialized services to some of the state’s most challenging youth. Half of the 200 beds will be filled by youth from the four Adolescent Sexual Offender Treatment programs that are currently housed in the closed-medium secure 40 year-old Summit Center. Twenty beds will be designated as a Life Safety and Medical Observation unit. The remaining beds will be filled by five high secure programs for youth with treatment needs related to substance abuse, sexual offending or serious and chronic criminal histories. Woodland Center was built with special consideration to the unique requirements of safely rehabilitating young men in need of such treatment.

Robert Brookins, chief of local Green Oak Township Police Department, congratulated Griffis on leading the campus to the successful completion of the new treatment complex.

“The training school was the police department’s biggest headache before Dr. Griffis assumed leadership of the campus,” Brookins said. “Over the past 3 ½ years, we have developed a very good relationship with the training school and our community is happy to have Maxey as a neighbor.”

Brookins comments reflect the dramatic decrease in escapes from campus. It has now been more than 28 months since there has been a successful escape from the campus. For comparison, 76 students walked away from campus in 1992. This reduction is due to the construction of secure perimeter fencing as well as policy changes implemented under Griffis’ administration.

Three hundred and fifty guests helped celebrate the completion of what many called “the impossible”. With this achieved, Griffis and his staff turn their attention to achieving the next “impossible” task.



**Chief Justice Corrigan and FIA director Howard present Nelson Griffis with framed aerial photographs of the W.J. Maxey Boys Training School campus during the dedication ceremony.**



## Acknowledging children's services that work

Van Buren County, state partners discuss successful local collaboration  
Local wraparound program is highlighted in community event

LAWRENCE – Success through community partnership, collaboration and innovation was the theme for a celebration of success in children's services in Van Buren County. The event was held March 13 and included guests from public and private partner agencies in the county.

Van Buren was the first county to receive this kind of recognition for its children's services programs. Family Independence Agency director Douglas E. Howard and Michigan Department of Community Health director James K. Haveman, Jr. joined other state and local officials in noting the commitment and passion demonstrated by Van Buren County, where collaboration has led to improved outcomes for the children in the community.

"The success was the result of cooperation and shared responsibility," Howard said. "Together the Van Buren partners shared a collective goal and vision that greatly benefited the children and families in their community."

"We are pleased to support the outstanding effort in Van Buren County," said Haveman.

Other community partners speaking at the event included: Marc DelMariani, director of Van Buren FIA; Vicki Clark, FIA program manager; Joe Leary, juvenile court director; John Clement, director of Van Buren County Community Mental Health; Lisa Pearson, New Outlook program supervisor; The Honorable Paul Hamre, Family Court Judge; Brad Keller, branch director, Bethany Christian Services; Jim Mapes, superintendent of Van Buren Intermediate School District; and Jeff Elliott, director of Van Buren-Cass District Health Department.

Highlighted in the event was the New Outlook wraparound program. The New Outlook program has developed through years of collaborative efforts. The

**Getting started:** Van Buren FIA's Vicki Clark, at podium, and Marc DelMariani, seated right, get the program started. The event celebrated the county's partnership to deliver children's services. During the celebration, parents (including the two below) told success stories and partners talked about what it takes to succeed with troubled families.



**Barb Baldwin**



**Teresa Reed**

roots of the program were started by an interagency task force that began in 1988 to look at alternatives to reduce growing child care fund expenditures.

The goals of this group included finding ways to better serve the county's youth without the road-blocks caused by categorical funding. From these beginnings –and many coordinated efforts—Van Buren County became one of the original sites for the Michigan Interagency Family Preservation Initiative in 1992. Wraparound has continued to develop in the county since that time. The program is now funded by a Title IV-E waiver managed care federal pilot.

New Outlook supervisor Lisa Pearson described the strength-based program as successful due to all of the individuals and agencies “working together to build creative solutions” for families. Three parents, Teresa Reed, Deb Keyser, and Barb Baldwin, whose families are currently or had previously been involved with New Outlook services, spoke about the positive changes the collaborative service brought into their lives. Keyser said there were “no miracles or overnight successes, but things got better.” She credits the success to the collaboration, saying, “it took a team of people.”

Other innovative FIA partnership programs recognized include the Family Group Decision Making pilot with Bethany Christian Services; the Parents In Education program with Van Buren ISD; the Teen Parent Program with the Van Buren-Cass District Health Department; and the Non-Preponderance of Evidence pilot program. Staff members from each program received recognition certificates signed by directors Howard and Haveman.

DelMariani hosted the event and made special mention of the caseworkers that are involved with children's services work on a daily basis. The workers must possess the “wisdom of Job” in making decisions in the best interest of children and families, he said. DelMariani also commented on the dedication of Van Buren FIA services workers who, while recognizing the benefits and importance of collaboration, are also well aware of the additional burden these partnerships place on their workload.

Howard said that through commitment to such partnerships as New Outlook, Van Buren has gone beyond territorial issues with customer families and realized that “they are community families.”

Howard said the community is strengthened through such innovative partnerships, and Haveman confirmed the way partnerships help improve communities.

“We are pleased to support the outstanding effort in Van Buren County,” said Haveman. “Fifteen years ago these organizations were not working together. That's all changed now.

“Their innovation and collaboration is truly beneficial to the children and families of this community.”

**One of many:** Lots of partners received awards during the ceremony. Local wrap-around supervisor Lisa Pearson is shown with state Community Health Department director Jim Haveman and FIA director Doug Howard. Parents gave testimony to the positive and helpful services they received from the program.



**Suitable for framing:** Partnership leaders include (from left): Haveman; Juvenile Court director Joe Leary; Family Court Judge Paul Hamre; John Clement, Van Buren County CMH director; Jeff Elliott, Cass-Van Buren District Health director; DelMariani; James Mapes, Van Buren ISD superintendent; and Howard.

■ For more information contact Marc DelMariani at (616) 621-2811.



---

# Earl Steenstra

## A legacy of integrity, leadership and service

### Tribute to the late Michigan Commission for the Blind chairman

By Patrick Cannon, Director

Michigan Commission for the Blind, Lansing

Telephone (517) 335-4265

Earl Steenstra, chairman of the Michigan Commission for the Blind, passed away March 10, leaving a legacy of integrity, service, leadership, and change. He had worked tirelessly to help improve the lives of blind persons in Michigan.



**Earl Steenstra**

Gov. Engler appointed Mr. Steenstra to the commission in February 1995 and named him chairman in March 1998. He served in that role until his death.

Mr. Steenstra's service as commissioner and chairperson on the Michigan Commission for the Blind significantly benefited the lives of hundreds of blind persons throughout the state and his contributions will be long remembered. The type of life he led and the depth of his character as an individual has served as a model for everyone, blind or sighted.

He exemplified the truth that blind persons can achieve excellence in all they do and he demonstrated how to achieve positive change through patience, perseverance, inclusion, and collaboration. His strong, quiet leadership on the commission, which was an important part of his life for more than seven years, will be genuinely missed.

Earl Steenstra was born and raised in Grand Rapids. He graduated with a bachelor's degree from Calvin College and attended graduate school at Michigan State University's School of Social Work. He also completed coursework in banking and business management.

Mr. Steenstra worked for four years as a social worker assisting neglected children for the State Department of Social Welfare (name of the Family Independence Agency from 1939-65.) He later worked 24 years as an assistant vice president and corporate director of purchasing for Old Kent Bank and Trust Company.

He became legally blind in 1970 as a result of a progressive retinal disease and received rehabilitation services from Grand Rapids Association for the Blind and Michigan Commission for the Blind. Mr. Steenstra went on to be executive director of the Grand Rapids Association for the Blind from 1988-90.

He was a very successful entrepreneur having started a business called East Sales, Inc. that provides business forms and label systems for industry. When he sold this company it had eight employees and sales of over \$2 million a year.

Mr. Steenstra started a second business, Medcare Systems, Inc., which provided specialized home health care. He was especially proud of Medcare Systems, calling it his "ministry to the community." The firm grew to employ more than 200 individuals whom he thought of as his Medcare family. He started a third business, Info Quest of West Michigan, which provided asset recovery and informational systems for employers. In addition to his distinguished business and professional career, Mr. Steenstra found many other ways to serve his community. He was a member of the Kentwood Board of Education and was very active with his church as a teacher, deacon, and ministry organizer. His other civic activities included the Lions Club, Junior Achievement, and the United Way.

He was married for 43 years to his wife, Mary, and had three children, David, Jennifer, and Jonathan. He has six grandchildren—Brandon, Bryant, Aaron, Michael, Bryce and Ethan. He lived in Kentwood.

In all he did, Mr. Steenstra conducted himself with dignity, class and concern for others. Warm memories will remain in the hearts of those who were privileged to know him as a friend and those who shared his vision and commitment will continue his work. As he once said: "We want to focus on abilities, not disabilities. It is important for our clients to realize that they can be independent, take care of themselves and their homes, and enjoy some leisure activities."



# Quality Recognition Program

## Mecosta County "Food Assistance Hotline" improves customer service

By Stan Parker, QRS Coordinator

FIA Office of Reengineering & Quality Management

Telephone (517) 373-7984

The Mecosta County Family Independence Agency established a toll-free telephone number for Food Assistance Program recipients in the county. The toll-free number was developed to reduce case errors, increase customer access to specialists, and increase customer case change reporting.

This exciting innovation resulted in the 33-member Mecosta team receiving a Quality Recognition System award of \$1,500. The award was presented at the Mecosta County Employee Recognition meeting March 21. The funds were deposited in the county's customer fund to help meet unmet needs and improve quality of life for customers.



**Mecosta County team members.** Front row from left: Sharon Christensen, director; Karil Lewis, Vickie Andres, Deb Rodabaugh, Sandy Hanford, Kathy Groff, Ruth Hawkey, Cindy Roak. Middle row: Ron Rodden, Karen Yokom, Sharon Hare, Marie Whipple, FIA Board member Alma Wortley, Trish McHugh, volunteer Marilyn Galbreath. Back row Bob Woycke, Valerie Sieffert, Pam Lewis, Carla Waldron, board member Jim Hauser, Nancy Lentz and Patti Hill.

The Mecosta County FIA team enhanced customer access to report Food Assistance changes by installing an 800 line. This is extremely helpful to many customers who do not own phones or are unable to pay for long distance calls.

During development of the hotline, there were two major problems for staff—covering the cost for the hotline and who would answer the hotline. The funding was provided by the Food Assistance Payment Accuracy Local Office Innovation Fund and volunteers were recruited to assist staff.

FIA employees or volunteers answer the toll-free number. They then complete a pre-printed form based on the customer's situation and forward the form to the appropriate specialist. The volunteer or employee is also responsible for maintaining a Food Assistance Hotline log to keep a record of the total number of calls received per day. If no one is available to answer the line, the customer has the option of leaving a voice mail message that is checked at least three times per day. The voice mail provides instructions for the caller to ensure the message is forwarded to the correct specialist.

Mecosta County expects the hotline will increase the rate customers report changes to specialists and will help reduce case errors. Notices in flyers, business cards and stickers inform present and future recipients of the hotline. Because there is no cost to the customer, the hotline removes a major barrier and increases their ability to have contact with their specialist.

In conjunction with this process improvement, a consultant assisted Mecosta County in making other customer improvements including: establishing one-on-one interviewing with the registration support specialist; relocating a copier for customer access to copy verifications; and conducting customer satisfaction survey calls.

■ For more information about the toll-free hotline, contact Trish McHugh, Mecosta County FIA, 800 Water Tower Road, Big Rapids, MI 49307, call (231) 796-4314 or email her at [mchughp2@michigan.gov](mailto:mchughp2@michigan.gov)

# FIA migrates to michigan.gov

Effective April 8, the Family Independence Agency web site migrated to [michigan.gov](http://michigan.gov) and can now be accessed at [www.michigan.gov/fia](http://www.michigan.gov/fia)

The new Family Independence Agency website represents the latest enhancement to the award winning Michigan.gov web portal. The site furthers Michigan's ability to ensure a single face of government to citizens.

The new FIA site includes many important features designed to increase citizens' access to Michigan's services. These features include a common look-and-feel, search engine, Quick Links and links to Michigan's privacy and security policies.

Citizens are encouraged to visit [www.michigan.gov/fia](http://www.michigan.gov/fia) when seeking information on public assistance, food assistance, child day care, adoption, foster care and related information.

Previously, the Family Independence Agency website was located at [www.mfia.state.mi.us](http://www.mfia.state.mi.us) Users are encouraged to save the new address.



*The Family Independence Agency will not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, sex, religion, age, height, weight, national origin, color, marital status, political beliefs or disability. If you need help with reading, writing, hearing, etc., under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are invited to make your needs known to an FIA office in your county.*

Copies printed: 17,500 / Total cost: \$5,008 / Unit cost: 29 cents each / Authority: FIA Director

For information about FIA programs, consult this Internet web address: [www.michigan.gov/fia](http://www.michigan.gov/fia)

Family Independence Agency  
Office of Communications  
P O Box 30037  
Lansing MI 48909

**Return Service Requested**

PRSRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
LANSING, MI  
PERMIT NO. 1200